*Dear President Barack Obama,*

*I am Noor Abdelfattah. Born in Chicago in November of 97’, I was blessed enough to grow up on Chicago’s North Shore. Growing up as child of a Muslim immigrant, I truly realize how privileged I am to live in the greatest country in the world. My grandfather left his homeland in 1951, the year my father was born, in search of his American dream. My father would not meet his own father until he was sixteen years old. Coming to this country with very little, my father was unable to attend college. However, he would spend long hours working low-paid jobs in order to provide for his family. Both my parents and five older brothers faced many difficulties before I was born.*

*At age seven, my oldest brother was caught in a Chicago gang fight where he took a bullet in the face. Today, that same brother is thirty-three years old and a graduate of University of Michigan Law School. The sacrifices my parents endured for their kids allowed us to prosper within our educational careers. Together, the educational institutions we have attended include University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign, Northwestern University, University of Michigan, and Loyola University Chicago.*

*Growing up, my parents have always taught us to treat everyone with respect. Although I grew up Muslim, my parents sent my siblings and I to Catholic high schools that placed us in an environment different than our own. Being the only Muslim in my class, I was allowed to interact with people who were raised different than myself. The opportunities my parents have given me allowed me to enter college open minded. I have met people I consider friends from all over the world.*

*However, with the hostile attitude some people carry towards Muslims, I believe that it is important that we remain together as a nation. I believe that the tradition of hosting an Iftar Dinner at the White House during the month of Ramadan is one tradition that shows the diversity our country holds. We, as Americans, are accepted for what we practice and how we look. On behalf of the Muslims living in the land of the free and home of the brave, I want to thank you for standing firmly with us in rejection of those who are hoping to limit our rights. Additionally, as your term comes to an end, I want to thank you for all the hard work you have done for all Americans and the rest of the world these past eight years as the President of the United States.*

*All the best,*

*Noor Abdelfattah*

*Dear President Obama,*

*Today, Sunday, June 12, 2016, I went to the grocery store with my daughter and I was afraid. My eyes darted around the store as I located and silently cataloged where each emergency exit was. Just in case. As I bought eggs and chicken nuggets for my daughter, the horror the victims must have endured during Orlando’s mass shooting was never far from my mind.*

*I was also incredibly angry. How can we allow private citizens to buy automatic weapons? They are weapons of war, designed to kill a massive amount of people in a short amount of time. Their purpose is to kill and terrorize.*

*I’ve been angry and afraid before. I’ve also written to you before. On Monday, December 17, 2012, I was afraid to go to work. I am a middle school teacher, and I didn’t know how I was going to address the events of Newtown with my students. I thought about how my classroom door didn’t lock from the inside. Nevertheless, I took a deep breath and walked into my classroom that day. I faced my 11 and 12 year old students, addressed the shooting, and then did the only thing I could; I taught reading and writing.*

*Since Newtown, my public school district spent tax money to replace every single lock in every single classroom so that they could be locked from the inside. We also received shades to cover the windows on our classroom doors. Just in case.*

*When I took a tour of my almost-three-year-old daughter’s preschool this year, the preschool director told me that most of the funds raised the year before were spent on “updating security.” Not on books, not on supplies, not on professional development for the teachers. Security. In a preschool. Just in case.*

*What kind of a country are we living in where I have to talk about mass shootings with 11 and 12 year-old children? Where I have to take instructional time to practice for mass shootings twice a year? What kind of a country creates a culture where my daughter’s preschool has to prepare for the horrible possibility of a mass shooting?*

*Automatic weapons, weapons of war, must be banned. There must be background checks so that people who are dangerous cannot buy weapons. We are not free if I am afraid at my job, afraid at the grocery store, and afraid for my daughter at preschool. We are all being terrorized. Enough is enough.*

*Thank you for being on the right side of this issue. I voted for you twice, and I’d vote for you again. We will miss you when you leave office.*

*Sincerely, Liz O'Connor*

*Dear President Obama,*

*I want you to know how much you mean to my daughter, Erin Elizabeth Peakovic. Born with biliary atresia in 1988, by the age of 10 she had a liver transplant. It took over two decades–until the Affordable Care Act–for Erin, and millions of Americans, to be assured they would have access to health care.*

*The provisions came along just in time. When Erin aged off her father’s health care plan at age 23 the provision to stay until age 26 was enacted. The pre-existing condition clause came just in time. When she turned 26 last year and was no longer able to stay on her father’s plan, the Exchange was enacted. Again, just in time.*

*In addition to being a liver transplant survivor, Erin was also diagnosed with pulmonary hypertension in 2006. She stays healthy and out of the hospital but requires exorbitantly expensive maintenance medication and medical follow-up. One medicine alone–bosentan–costs $8,300 a month. That is not a typo or a misplaced comma. $8,300 a month.*

*In recent exchanges of texts between Erin and me, she has said, “I am so not ready for Obama to leave office!” ; “I wish President Obama could know he saved my life with health care” ; “If I ever met President Obama I would cry!” ; “President Obama is the best President our country has ever had.” You are her hero like none other. You did not dare let her get sick for lack of access to health care, just as you told the Supreme Court, “You will not dare repeal ACA”. You are not only Erin’s hero, you are mine, too.*

*Erin works in a grocery store, and just got full-time. It is a hard job and she is dedicated and proud worker. She will be eligible for employee-sponsored health care this fall. She is an example of how the ACA works. It allows her to work and maintain her health and contribute to society, while being able to have affordable access to the medicine and specialists who keep her alive.*

*If you wanted to make one very special woman’s dream come true, please meet Erin Elizabeth. It would be the dream of a lifetime for her, one that has been hard fought, full of obstacles, but also full of hope and promise.*

*Sincerely,*

*Andrea Peakovic*

My father, an army doctor ticketed for the invasion of Japan, was euphoric upon word of Hiroshima. Yet if alive today, he would applaud President Obama’s decision to visit in pursuit of curbing nuclear weapons. In his first letter home after news reached his Pacific camp, he wrote, “Today is the fantastic news that may signify the end of the war very shortly. It’s almost too good to be true! The description we’ve been given describes a veritable Buck Rogers mechanism of destruction that is capable of destroying any city or nation. Can it be true?” 2 days earlier, on the same day of the bomb, he had written somberly, “The cold facts are that a land invasion of Japan would cost more deaths and wounded than the European war. I’d rather see a continued sea blockade and continuous air bombardment, even for two or three years, rather than tremendous casualties, even though I long for home.” A year of treating Army and civilian wounded int he Pacific had educated him to the degradation of war, where a bullet or mortar had come to symbolize “inanimate metal in which all the sadism of the human animal is expressed.” So his initial joy was unabated: “I believe it to be true. For the first time I feel that the war may end shortly and I hope to God it’s so.” But my father sensed instinctively that bigger issues were afoot. In his next letter, his elation clashed with what he knew were military implications of the atomic age. “There’s something frightening about this new bomb, a weapon that bodes danger for the future, if human beings don’t quit acting like apes. The bomb is not a pleasant weapon to contemplate and mankind’s past performances don’t make me optimistic.” In that letter, he wrote about the “world-revolutionary” possibilities of peaceful atomic use. Indeed, after returning home, he became an early practitioner of nuclear medicine in the 1950s when radionuclides were first used to treat thyroid cancer. My father’s personal history in an atomic world mirrors the nuclear contradictions we face. He never forgot the corrosive aspects of war from combat and what a thermonuclear weapon could wreak. He applied nuclear research as a doctor, yet knew the horrific medical consequences of uncontrolled radiation and ardently opposed nuclear weapons testing and proliferation. But he never regretted the nation’s decision to level Hiroshima. He and thousands of others came home alive and uninjured. He would never apologize, but he would say we could never do it again.

David Smollar

*Dear President Obama,*

*I am writing to express gratitude for you having extending an invitation to Maná to the White House on Cinco de Mayo. […] My grandfather and parents came to the United States of America as Mexican immigrants to offer me the opportunity of a better life and I am beyond grateful for their sacrifices. Their sacrifices allowed me to obtain a high school education, which none of them were given the opportunity to do so. Upon graduating high school, I was awarded the Gates Millennium Scholarship that allowed me to cultivate my education and earn two bachelors degrees. Last summer, I moved from the west coast to the DC area, and I am currently earning a masters of public health in global environmental health at The George Washington University with the help of the Gates Millennium scholarship. I am sharing this because I hope that my experience shows how Mexicans are not bring problems to the United States of America, but instead are contributing in a myriad of beneficial ways. My story is only one. We have many stories of our contributions to the United States of America, and Maná is a beautiful representation of such contributions. Thus, through you having extended an invitation to Maná, I feel as if the rest of us have also been invited to celebrate the contributions of Mexicans to this country at the White House.*

*Thank you,*

*Brenda Trejo*

*Dear President Obama,*

*My name is Madison […] and I’m 11 years old. I live in Crofton, Maryland. I’m writing to you about my dad. He’s an inmate at the Patuxent Institute in Jessup, MD. He gets release in August 2016. When he gets out I want him to have a great job, a house, and to see me more often. My biggest wish is for him to be very successful and never go to jail again. It’s really hard for convicted felons to get a great job and find the support they need to be successful. As President of the United States of America, is there anything you can do to make it easier for my dad to get a job and find the support he needs?*

*As an 11 year old, I thought I didn’t have a voice, but I realized I did. When he went to jail I was sad and disappointed. My mom and I looked for books to help me through this difficult time. We couldn’t find anything to help me. So, on my own, I decided to write a book to help every kid in the world that has a parent in jail. I wanted other kids to know they’re not alone in their situation. On December 1, 2015, I launched my book […] It’s a best seller on Amazon.*

*If an 11 year old can find the courage to write a book about one of the most embarrassing situations in her life time, then I know you can do something as the President of the United States of America to help support all convicted felons when they get out of jail.*

*I hope you can find 20 minutes in your day to read my book. Please share it with Mrs. Obama, Malia, and Natasha.*

*“I will continue to love my daddy and pursue my dreams. His mistakes won’t stop me from being who I’m meant to be. I promise to not judge him by his mistakes, but by the size of his heart.”*

*Sincerely,*

*Madison*